Engagement with Regional Stakeholders on Integrating Internationally-Trained Workers into the Workforce

Report on Five Canadian Roundtables:

Fredericton, Hamilton, Victoria, Saskatoon, Windsor

October 2005

Canadian Labour and Business Centre

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The Canadian Labour and Business Centre appreciates the financial support of Citizenship and Immigration Canada for their contribution to this project. The Canadian Labour and Business Centre was established in 1984 and has evolved as a centre for business-labour dialogue and consensus building. Effective public policy in labour market and skills issues requires broadly based stakeholder engagement. In addition to labour and business, the Centre enjoys active Board participation from federal, provincial and territorial governments, and community colleges. This combination has enabled the Centre to build a unique Canadian forum.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Over the past several years, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and organizations such as the Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC) have focused considerable attention on the role of immigration in meeting Canada's current and future labour and skills requirements. This topic has risen to prominence in policy circles within all three levels of government, its apparent urgency rooted in two central observations. First, population demographics characterized by below-replacement level fertility rates have led to slowing population growth, an aging population, and a growing wave of retirements. Second, immigration has rapidly become the major factor in Canada's net labour force growth. Over the past decade, immigrants have accounted for 70 percent of Canada's labour force growth, and by 2011, this is expected to reach 100 percent. Already, key sectors of the economy such as manufacturing depend entirely on immigration for labour force growth (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2004).

During the 1990s, an average of 220,000 immigrants came to Canada each year, a large majority of whom intending to settle in the country's three major metropolitan areas of Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver. In fact, 43% of recent immigrants – those who arrived between 1991 and 2001 – live in Toronto (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2004). While the focus of immigration activity has largely been on Canada's major metropolitan areas, less is known about the immigration trends, facts and issues characterizing its second-tier cities. In view of this situation, CIC has provided guidance and financial support to undertake a series of roundtables on immigration in five of the country's second-tier cities.

1.2 Objectives and Scope

The main objective of these roundtables was to hold consultations with local and regional stakeholders on integrating immigrants into the workforce, in five locations. More specifically, the roundtables were designed to elicit local and regional perspectives on possible solutions to the labour market integration challenges facing immigrants, and to learn about local initiatives and models – particularly those involving business and labour – that have been designed to meet labour market integration challenges. The specific objectives of the project were the following:

1. To engage business and labour in a discussion with the Honorable Dr. Hedy Fry, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, about the issue of immigrant integration into local economies, in five different communities.
2. To provide a mechanism for business and labour along with immigrant-serving agencies and others to share with the Parliamentary Secretary what works, what does not work, and how to move forward.

3. To provide a means for the federal government through the Parliamentary Secretary to better understand needs and concerns as expressed by business and labour, to strengthen the links between business, labour, and community and government partners active in immigrant settlement issues.
4. To explore means and interest in the sharing of best practices at the workplace level *vis-à-vis* the attraction, retention, workplace integration, and settlement of immigrants.
5. To help to build capacity for future sustained collaboration at the community level among the immigrant serving organizations, community based groups, business, and labour.

While the roundtable discussions have focused on the perspective of business and labour leaders in the communities, they have also involved active participation from settlement organizations, educational institutions, and representatives of municipal, provincial and federal governments.

1.3 Structure of the Roundtables

The series of five roundtables took place between January, 2005 and March, 2005, each following more or less the same agenda (Appendix A contains a model agenda). Each roundtable was facilitated by either the CEO or a senior staff member of the CLBC,[1] who emphasized the strategic importance of immigration for meeting Canada's current and future labour market needs.

Prior to each roundtable, CLBC Directors of Business, Labour, and Communications met with key local stakeholders as a means to initiate and inform a productive dialogue on immigration, and identify key issues. In addition, CLBC researchers, in advance of each roundtable, prepared a statistical profile of the main immigration trends and facts of relevance to the host city or region, with a view to providing a factual context for the ensuing discussions. A summary of the profile was presented by a CLBC senior researcher during the roundtables. Table 1 below provides a summary of the roundtables' attendance and location (Appendix B contains a list of all participants and observers). These five cities were chosen in partnership with CIC, to include a mix of those with a relatively developed immigrant settlement community or strategy, and those with less experience or infrastructure but a sustained interest in the immigration issue.

Part and parcel to each roundtable was a presentation by the Honorable Dr. Fry on a Canadian framework for integrating internationally-trained Canadians and immigrants into the labour market. In her presentation, she reminded participants of the importance of focusing on more than just immigrants when discussing integration; Canadians who have studied abroad are liable to experience the same problems than foreign-trained

[1] Shirley Seward, Chief Executive Officer acted as a moderator and host at three of the five roundtables while Derwyn Sangster, Director, Business played this important role at the remaining two roundtables. Linda Silas, President of the Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions, co-chaired the first roundtable held in Fredericton with Ms. Seward.

immigrants. Dr. Fry also reminded roundtable participants of the role of immigration for Canada's global competitiveness and social cohesion. She presented some of the basic immigration facts and figures, providing a good rationale for addressing the barriers and challenges currently facing foreign-trained Canadians and immigrants in their attempt to become productive members of society. She also outlined the past and current efforts of the Canadian Government to address these immigration-related issues, focusing on four areas of progress:

- Addressing assessment and recognition of foreign credentials.
- Enhanced Language Training and Bridge-to-Work.
- Improved labour market information.
- Conducting research to more clearly identify current and future labour market needs and compare them with available skills.

Efforts to date have concentrated on the first two areas. Dr. Fry's central message was that multi-faceted partnerships are the key to success in this important area. At each roundtable, Dr. Fry responded to concerns raised by participants by explaining current Government of Canada policies and programs that aim to facilitate the entry of internationally-trained workers into the Canadian labour market. She also stressed repeatedly that their comments and suggestions would be used to help shape future progress in this area.

Table 1
Roundtables' attendance and timing

Date	*Location*	*Number and type of participants*		
		Participants	*Observers*	*TOTAL*
January 25, 2005	Fredericton, N.B.	33	15	48
February 9, 2005	Hamilton, Ontario	31	10	41
March 2, 2005	Victoria, B.C.	28	5	33
March 18, 2005	Saskatoon, Sask.	39	23	62
March 31, 2005	Windsor, Ontario	35	6	41

1.4 Structure of the Report

This report is divided into five sections (excluding this introduction). Chapter 2 provides an overview of the main immigration trends and issues that were discussed during the roundtables, focusing on those common to all centres. A distinction is made between the trends and issues relating to the attraction and retention of immigrants, and those associated with labour market integration of immigrants. The section that follows deals with the immigration-related issues and challenges that are specific to each of the five locations or regions where the roundtables took place. Chapter 4 focuses on the instructive examples of community- or region-wide initiatives or projects designed to increase attraction, retention or the integration of immigrants that were discussed during

the roundtables. The following chapter reports on the various suggestions and recommendations that were made by roundtable participants, with a view to provide guidance on the possible roles business, labour, government and other groups could play in attracting, retaining or integrating immigrants into second-tier communities.

One caveat must be made: in light of the large volume of ideas, observations and comments that were made during the roundtable discussions, decisions had to be made about how best to achieve a balance between providing a faithful and detailed account of the discussions that took place and keeping the amount of information reported to a manageable size. As a result, not all specific examples, comments and observations have been reported, and individual observations have often been summarized and grouped along a number of themes or topic areas whenever possible.

2. KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS

This chapter contains a review of the main immigration trends, issues and challenges that were identified by roundtable participants, focusing on those common to all locations. The reader is cautioned that this report reflects the comments and perceptions of roundtable participants whose views may not accurately reflect the policies, programs and activities of stakeholders.

2.1 The Common Ground

In hindsight, it is difficult to decide whether the five communities that hosted the roundtables have more commonalties than differences, when it comes to the immigrant trends, facts and issues that they face. What is clear, however, it that the unique economic and social characteristics of these communities, and the level and characteristics of the immigrant populations they attract, fundamentally shape the nature and priorities of the immigration issues they grapple with. The background research carried out by the CLBC has uncovered marked differences between communities in terms of immigrant retention, with some areas losing and other gaining immigrants through secondary migration. Another important difference is the labour market outcomes experienced by recent immigrants compared to that of the Canadian-born: immigrants in some communities do much better than those in other communities. In this context, the evidence gathered through roundtable discussions seems to support the notion that so-called 'bottom-up' initiatives at the local level are best suited to meet location-specific challenges and are thus well placed for the development of appropriate actions.

Another important observation is that emerging partnerships between community-based organizations, business, labour, educational institutions, and governments highlight the potential role that strong multi-faceted networks can play in creating awareness of issues, enhancing access to, and utilization of, information and program resources. As the Policy Research Initiative has observed, the establishment of effective connections represents an important issue for newcomers as well as for host communities: "Canadian communities and employers frequently face a number of difficulties in reaching out to new immigrants and tapping into their potential contributions" (Policy Research Initiative, 2003).

One final observation is that local stakeholders understand well that immigrant integration involves more than providing access to employment opportunities. Addressing the needs of immigrant families – including housing, education, health care, childcare, and financial management – are part and parcel of successful *community* integration. Individual stakeholder examples of outreach and assistance to immigrant families can be shared and emulated through local social networks. During the consultations, several such examples involving business, labour or community groups were explored, and they point to the importance of including the social and economic integration of immigrants and their families in a comprehensive and community-based approach.

2.2 Attracting and Retaining Immigrants: Barriers and Challenges

Participants in all five roundtables were quick to identify barriers and challenges that hinder their ability to attract and retain immigrants in their communities. The following provides a synthesis of the identified barriers and challenges that have relevance in all five roundtable community settings.

Countering demographic and labour market trends

There was general agreement at all five roundtables that an aging population, slowing population growth, and resulting wave of retirements give rise to immigration as a practical response contributing to meet current and future labour market needs.

Setting realistic expectations

Participants in all five roundtables made the observation that immigrants are 'not told the whole story' before they land in Canada and, as a result, it was deemed essential to set immigrant expectations straight and not 'hide the fact that they will face particular challenges' when they come to our country.

Temporary workers

The issue of temporary workers brought some controversy in a number of roundtables, with labour representatives generally opposed to the program – seeing it as a means to circumvent the hiring of unionized workers and because of the poor conditions faced by temporary workers – and employers and business representatives generally in favor of it (but sometimes lamenting the program's inefficiencies).

Access to programs, resources and information

The point was made repeatedly that CIC, Canadian embassies and high commissions' phone lines do not work very well. It is apparently difficult even for Canadian-born to work through the system and get to talk to someone. Along the same lines, the issue of a lengthy immigration process was raised by several roundtable participants.

Another issue that was raised is the fact that newcomers generally do not have a good understanding of the programs and services available to them. CIC, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), and the PNP need to be more visible and target their interventions at better servicing the immigrant population. Several participants mentioned the lack of labour market information available to immigrants before coming to Canada as an important issue, as well as a lack of support services that can help them integrate into the labour market once they are here.

Focusing on non-university trained immigrants

There was near consensus among roundtable participants that there is too much emphasis given to university-trained immigrants at the expense of non-university trained ones. This issue was particularly severe in regions experiencing shortages of skilled trades peoples.

2.3 Integrating Immigrants: Barriers and Challenges

There was considerable discussion about the challenges facing immigrants in their attempt to integrate into their host communities. The issue of integration has also provided a focal point for fruitful information exchanges on the role of the various stakeholders in facilitating the overall integration of immigrants and their families.

Lack of employment opportunities or labour shortages?

One area of disagreement between (some) business representatives and union leaders is the existence – or lack thereof – of labour shortages. Several employers in different roundtables expressed concerns about boming skills and labour shortages, and how they view immigration as a solution to solve the shortages. Business representatives from all five roundtables lamented, with varying intensity, about their limited capacity to meet their skills needs in the short and medium term.

Lack of national standards and barriers to inter-provincial labour mobility

The lack of national standards for credentialing and certification, and the existence of barriers to inter-provincial labour mobility, were identified by several participants in many roundtables as important issues affecting the country's capacity to integrate foreign-trained workers.

Another issue identified by both business and labour leaders was the fact that the workforce is highly mobile but that there are unnecessary barriers to inter-provincial mobility, particularly in the construction sector. The point was made that there is freer movement of workers between countries in Europe than between Canadian provinces. In the Canadian context, the point was made that the Red Seal program was not a panacea because it relies too much on a 'paper credentialing process.'

Community and workplace perceptions about immigration

A few respondents highlighted the existence of negative public attitudes toward immigrants, in particular refugees. The perception still exists in some communities that immigrants have low skills levels, that they steal jobs from Canadian-born workers, and that they represent a burden on society's social safety net.

Inadequacy of language training

The issue of the adequacy of language training provided to new Canadians gave rise to a significant volume of exchanges. One central point that was made is that there is a bit of a disconnect between the langua ge training typically provided to immigrants – generally up to L3 – and what is required in the workplace (L6 or 7). Moreover, it appears that some immigrants are simply unable to access language training. In addition to language training, there is a need for cultural awareness training, an area that is currently under-funded.

The point was made by representatives of francophone immigrant-serving agencies that a sizable proportion of new immigrants have French as their second language, but they have little or no knowledge of services available to them in French. Furthermore, immigrant children born in Canada do not automatically have access to a French education, which can be a real barrier/shock for those who have French as their first language and little command of English.

Some discussion centered around lack of access to enhanced language training (ELT) programs, which are designed to go beyond basic literacy and address, for example, language requirements in the workplace.

Multiplicity of stakeholders makes coordination difficult

One of the other key stumbling blocks identified by several interveners is the fact that the immigration "file" is not owned by one department, federally or provincially, thus making the number of stakeholders involved in the process part of the problem.

Lack of funding for immigrant-serving agencies

Another important issue to find common acceptance is the lack of funding affecting provincial programs and local immigrant-serving agencies. The point was made that the financial situation of immigrant serving agencies has been deteriorating as of late, as the provincial and federal governments have been downloading responsibilities onto them without a corresponding increase in funding.

Furthermore, the number of immigrants coming to access services is continually increasing, partly a result of so-called secondary migration[2] (from the major metropolitan areas to second-tier cities). Several respondents from different roundtables made the point that the current funding formula based on settlement intentions may disadvantage cities that are net recipients of this secondary migration, and that immigrant serving agencies typically do not have access to long-term sustainable funding, thus limiting their ability to support the labour market integration of immigrants. A large number of effective programs are pilot projects, thus raising concern about their lack of sustainability.

Lack of SMEs' internal capacity to integrate immigrants

The point was made at several roundtables that the needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are not currently met by existing immigration-related programs. Several participants in various roundtables pointed out that since SMEs that do not have human resource departments or staff, existing programs do not work as well because of their heavy reporting requirements and red tape.

[2] In the present context, secondary migration involves movements of immigrants away from their initial settlement destination to other Canadian destinations.

3. SPECIFIC COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL ISSUES

This chapter provides a summary account of the immigration issues and challenges specific to the communities or regions where the roundtables took place. The reader is reminded that several of the key issues and challenges that were raised during particular roundtable sessions were presented in Chapter Two and are not repeated here, given that they were identified by respondents from several roundtables. The reader is cautioned again that the participants' views and perceptions that are being reported here have not been checked for accuracy or validity.

3.1 Fredericton

Participants to the Fredericton roundtable came from all regions of the province and, as a result, they provided a provincial perspective on immigration. The immigration facts and figures that were presented during the first part of the roundtable highlighted the fact that the province: (1) is experiencing a net population decline; (2) attracts relatively few immigrants; and (3) is experiencing an immigrant retention problem. These basic facts provided a context within which a discussion of issues and challenges took place.

For one participant at least, demographic trends in the province and, more generally, the Atlantic provinces represented the most important concern. Part of the concern is that the region – so-called Atlantica – is the most homogenous, white area of North America, resulting in a lack of public awareness about the immigration issue. In the context of a federal policy on immigration, the point was made that there is no one-size-fits-all immigration solution, and that the local context needs to be carefully considered.

Community perceptions

One respondent talked about a 'barrier of perception' that exists in the community to the effect that all refugees are perceived to have low skills levels. She called for dispelling the myth and taking a close look at the skills and experience that refugees bring with them.

Access to financial resources

One business representative made the point that capital is key to attracting immigrants through job creation. In this regard, one central issue is the sustained capital flight from the province, through such means as RRSP investments outside the region. The suggestion was made that the federal government should invest its pension money in the region, even if it is to the tune of a few percentage points, so as to increase investment activity and, by extension, create more employment opportunities for all workers, including foreign-trained workers.

Another important point is that the province has significant resources but, due to its geographic and linguistic composition, immigrant-serving agencies and provincial government programs targeting immigrants are scrambling to find sufficient funding. Newcomers typically settle in the province's three major cities, necessitating three

separate immigrant serving agencies. According to one respondent, related to that is a trend towards accessing only project funding, making it extremely difficult to retain experienced and well-trained staff. It was said that many of these staff work on a volunteer basis once their normal, paid work is completed as a means to ensure full access to employment and support services for their clients. The end result is uncertainty for the organizations and increasing stress for their employees.

In addition, the bilingual nature of the province brings in the additional challenge of providing services in French or English. Since the number of immigrants the province receives is relatively low, and given the current funding formula applied by the federal government, the result is a relatively small amount of funding that has to be spread very thinly among several agencies, almost to the point of inefficacy. In a similar vein, one participant said that in the province, foreign-trained nurses are being turned away from foreign credentials recognition (FCR) programs because of reduced funding.

International Medical Graduates

The situation for International Medical Graduates was described by one Fredericton participant as 'pathetic.' Mention was made of an immigrant who was hired locally and whose wife was a foreign-trained physician. Since she could practice in Nova Scotia but not in New Brunswick, this immigrant couple ended up moving out of the province so that she could work in her area of expertise.

Language issues and training

Not unrelated to the previous point is the observation that the province of New Brunswick is disadvantaged on the language training front, given that language training dollars are allocated more or less evenly throughout the province's several relatively small centres. An added complication is the fact that there are two official languages in which training has to be delivered.

That said, the number one issue that was identified by a participant is the lack of language training that is available in the province. Due to limited financial resources and inflexible regulations, the province can only offer language training up to level 3, which is well below the level required for employment. Given that, it is very difficult to expect a newcomer to find and keep a job when he or she cannot adequately speak the language. According to this participant, there have been numerous conferences, meetings and roundtables held to discuss the challenges around immigration, and this language training issue keeps coming to the top of the list. There have apparently been employer-based surveys that have identified the lack of language skills, in either official language, as a barrier to making a smooth transition to the labour market.

Addressing skills and labour shortages

A representative from a business association discussed the fact that the New Brunswick economy is weighted towards natural resources, and that the average age of workers in mining is in the high 40s. Based on this, it is expected that massive waves of retirements will occur in the near future. From the perspective of this business association,

availability of skilled workers has been rising as an issue of importance, and a recent survey of members indicates that 42% of those surveyed mentioned they would hire foreign-trained workers. This participant presented some evidence of a retention issue, mentioning a study that showed that 70% of immigrants leave Saint John within five years of settling into the province. The implication is that New Brunswick is not perceived as a destination of choice for immigrants. An additional point was made about the importance of minimizing regulatory barriers.

A union spokesperson described Canadian unions' long-standing interest in immigration. She made the point that a declining birth rate, declining population and out-migration make immigration strategically important for the province. In this context, the New Brunswick Federation of Labour has taken a strong human rights perspective on immigration, as evidenced by the fact that the union is a designated Refugee Sponsorship Program Group. She noted that foreign credential recognition and education are key to the integration of immigrants, and that a good job is only part of a successful immigration process. She then called for steps to be taken to reduce discrimination and racism.

Meeting the needs of Francophone immigrants

A representative from the Société des acadiens et acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick mentioned that the organization has been actively involved in immigration issues for the past three years. The organization is a member of the *Table de concertation provinciale sur l'immigration francophone*, which seeks to attract immigrants who would be interested in integrating into the francophone acadian community. This representative made the point that such a goal can only be met through well-developed settlement infrastructure, and that pieces of this infrastructure are currently lacking. An additional challenge is to convince immigrants with high levels of education – at the doctorate level, for example – to come and work in some of the rural acadian areas of the province where their skills are needed.

Meeting the needs of employers

One employer contended that the majority of resources in the province are focused on the immigrant or the service agencies, but there is limited support available to prepare employers for integrating newcomers into the workplace. Through the work of an existing federal/provincial working group, stakeholders including employers, settlement agencies and the provincial government have started to identify opportunities to provide support to employers, and they are now developing an action plan in a cross-jurisdictional and inter-departmental manner. Employers, he argued, only want to access one reliable source of information, and they do not want to go from department to department and try to figure out who looks after what part of the process. By better preparing employers, he said, the probability of hiring newcomers would increase and, with improved employment opportunities, the province would be able to retain more immigrants.

Somewhat related to the challenges facing employers is perceived lack of effectiveness of the province's PNP. In particular, the absence of binding elements to the program, such as those that exist in Manitoba's PNP (that require the business immigrant to stay in the

province for a definite period of time if they are to avoid a financial penalty), was noted by one participant. The suggestion was made to revise New Brunswick's PNP in order to make it more effective and more binding.

Attracting foreign students

A New Brunswick-based community college representative discussed his organization's experience with international students, pointing out that one significant challenge is to have available a support infrastructure for these individuals. This college does not have the critical mass that would allow it to hire a counselor, for example, who could be available to meet their needs. The college is therefore forced to tap into existing complement of staff at the risk of overburdening them. Another participant supported the notion that international students should be given an opportunity to work in the region, and that they represent an important asset to their host communities.

3.2 Hamilton

The Hamilton roundtable brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including a strong labour contingent. The CLBC research that was presented early into the session shed light on the following central issues: (1) demographic trends that signal a decline in the labour force in the near future; (2) difficult labour market integration for recent immigrants; and (3) a relatively high immigrant retention rate.

Reacting to these CLBC data, one intervener stressed the importance for a small city like Hamilton of immigrants' secondary migration and its positive impact on retention. The observation was made that Hamilton is probably the recipient of secondary migration from Toronto, because of immigrants' perception about Hamilton's lower cost of living and existence of employment opportunities. He mentioned that these perceptions should be used to the city's advantage as it develops its immigrant recruitment strategy.

Access to financial resources

A few participants argued that since Hamilton is the recipient of much secondary migration, larger cities such as Toronto that attract much of the funding and end up loosing some of their immigrants to second-tier cities receive more than their fair share of funding for immigrant services. As a result, a different distribution of settlement funds should take place. Furthermore, the smaller centres, with their smaller tax base, have difficulty coping with an immigrant influx. In the wake of increasing accountability requirements, it is difficult for service delivery agencies to be held accountable for results as they are faced with shrinking resources.

Another participant mentioned that secondary migration may be higher than Census data suggest. He argued that Hamilton is a jumping point to immigrants' second or third intra-country migration. The city can thus legitimately play a role as a bridge to other centres, but additional funding would be needed in order to make that role sustainable.

Workplace support

One intervener spoke about the lack of support in the workplace. The point was made that the 'Canadian way' results in people 'running from place to place' and, therefore, not taking the time to help and/or welcome newcomers in their workplaces. The suggestion was made that perhaps Canadian-born workers need to improve on a subset of their language skills, namely listening skills.

Lack of language training

Another participant made the point that despite discussions about program innovation, the reality is that the situation of immigrants and their children is deteriorating. For instance, immigrants' children born in Canada have no access to specialized services such as language and literacy training, although a sizable proportion of them have low English or French language skills by virtue of not being exposed to English or French until they access formal schooling. Another participant observed that there is also a lack of services in French, for example during citizenship ceremonies.

One long-time serving agency intervener observed that there does not appear to be much difference between programs of the past (17 years ago) and those delivered today. Language issues are key, and language teachers are not well supported or compensated. Capital resources are becoming more and more difficult to find.

Gap in service delivery

One participant observed that although a range of services exist in the Hamilton area to meet the needs of immigrants, there is a need for a continuum of educational services, including assessment services. He talked about the importance of establishing local partnerships and coming up with 'locally-brewed solutions.' In this regard, he believed that one advantage Hamilton has over larger cities is that the stakeholders know each others, which makes it possible to 'leave the ego at the door,' sit down to work together and find local solutions.

A somewhat different issue was raised to the effect that the assessment of would-be immigrants' skills, education and work experience is often lacking, based on the fact that, for instance, a significant proportion of self-declared engineers are by Canadian standards technicians. This situation suggests that it is essential to fully assess immigrants' specific skills set before they migrate to Canada, rather than relying solely on occupational title.

Lack of employment opportunities

An interesting point was made by a representative from the engineering profession. He mentioned that the engineering profession is facing a unique situation of oversupply. He argued that better communications about employment opportunities – or lack thereof – and the credentialing process, particularly in terms of the requirements for Canadian experience, are needed even before decisions to migrate are made, so as not to raise false expectations and, hopefully, reduce the flow of credentialing requests coming in from foreign-trained engineers.

Red tape

A representative from the Hamilton Training Advisory Board's Human Resources Committee mentioned that the committee has recently been organizing a series of seminars involving small businesses, and one of the issues that surfaced is that the cost, time and efforts required of small businesses to access tax credits for hiring immigrant workers are prohibitive.

Focusing on skilled trades workers

One participant used the CLBC data to remind the group that there is a relative lack of immigrants with skilled trades experience. He argued that this situation is not surprising given that the point system discourages immigrants with trade certification from coming to Canada.

Taking care of unemployed workers

Union representatives made the point that a sizable proportion of their (skilled trades) membership are unemployed and, as a result, it makes little sense to bring in additional workers through immigration before labour market outcomes can be improved for their members. One participant argued that free trade and the deskilling of jobs have resulted in fewer, poorer job opportunities for both immigrants and Canadian-born workers, exacerbating an already difficult situation for immigrants. Along these lines, another participant noted that a common pattern for immigrants is to take on so-called survival jobs in order to meet financial/family obligations, and end up staying in these jobs because of lack of time/opportunities to train, take on language training, or search for other jobs; thus entering into a vicious circle.

3.3 Windsor

Similar to Hamilton, participation in the Windsor roundtable featured a strong labour contingent, as well as representatives from the business community and immigrant serving agencies. The city's demographic and immigrant profile presented by the CLBC differs in some respect from that of other roundtable locations. More specifically: (1) the population is aging but is relatively young compared to the rest of the province; (2) immigration levels have increased significantly in recent years; (3) immigrants' retention rate is quite high; but (4) the labour market performance of recent immigrants is poor compared to that of the Canadian born.

Discussing Windsor's overall social and economic climate and its openness to immigration, one participant talked about a 1995 study that looked at the major issues faced by visible minorities. The study identified poverty, lack of housing, and workplace discrimination as central issues needing attention The point was made that these issues are still the same today, and one significant barrier faced by immigrants themselves and immigrant serving agencies is access to funding.

Community perceptions

One labour representative discussed the plight of low skilled foreign-trained workers. He talked about a perspective held in the public that these workers are invited to come and work here because nobody else wants to do the type of work they perform. One implication is that these workers are under-protected and face poor working conditions, thus forming an underclass of workers. He used the example of the meatpacking industry to stress a community perception that exists about low skilled foreign-trained workers allegedly driving wages down. He argued that more should be done to protect the rights and working conditions of these workers.

Another intervener provided examples of the misconceptions and information shortcomings that exist: immigrants are not told their education may not be assessed at par, that they need Canadian work experience, and that they may face discrimination in the workplace. He also spoke of the misconceptions that abound concerning the contribution immigrants make to the economy and society, arguing that too many people feel that immigrants steal jobs. He pointed out that a large number of internationally-trained workers with good education end up working as janitors or taxi drivers because they do not want to depend on welfare.

Lack of coordination

The point was raised that, while there are many community groups and service agencies currently helping immigrants, there is a certain redundancy of efforts and no clear directional focus. Without a central coordinating body, the community may be missing opportunities for greater synergies. The question of how the federal government's immigration strategy links up with other broader, social services and issues was raised. The particular issue of access to child care for immigrant women attempting to integrate the labour market was noted.

On a somewhat related note, one participant expressed concern about the government's tendency to 'pass the buck,' particularly as it affects both permanent and temporary workers. The point was made by the same person that 'nobody seems to take responsibility for resolving the immigrants' labour market integration issue,' and nobody seems to have the money to help solve the issue.

Another concern was raised about potential shortcomings in the immigration point system, whereby math and science skills do not appear to count as much as language skills. One participant used the example of several former immigrants who are today's industry leaders, and who would not be accepted into Canada today under the current point system because their command of English when they first arrived in the country was poor. He believed that the current point system may contribute to a potentially enormous loss of skills and wealth for Canada.

Lack of funding

An important issue raised by a participant is the difficult access to funding for language training. He mentioned a situation in which employers brought in temporary workers

from abroad and then turned to a local union for delivering language training. This situation went unresolved as nobody seemed to have the financial resources required to deliver the training.

More generally, the predicament of small not-for-profit organizations involved in providing training and other immigrant-related services was mentioned by a few participants. It was hoped that some of the federal money recently announced for immigration-related programming could be accessed by these groups. One labour representative discussed 'pilot project fatigue' and the fact that senior levels of government have cut funding to programs that deliver immigrant services, including some that the Canadian Auto Workers Union has been trying to sustain over time.

Mixed views on labour market needs

It is fair to say that there was some disagreement between business and labour representatives regarding the existence and severity of labour and skill shortages in the Windsor area. Employers have been discussing labour shortages in certain occupations and industries, but unions have been pointing out to the existence of sizable pools of unemployed workers in certain occupations. One participant described the situation as a disconnect between business and labour.

In this regard, one labour representative expressed concern about the situation affecting the building trades, arguing that there is a misconception about the extent to which labour shortages exist in the trades. He mentioned that there is currently 30-40% unemployment among building tradespersons and that attention should be paid to these workers before looking at immigration as a solution to labour shortages. A further dimension to this issue is the issuance of temporary work permits to foreign-trained workers. He added that FCR is an important issue that is currently being addressed, but that requires more efforts.

Another member of a local union noted with some optimism that, despite their differences, local unions can now work much more closely with the Windsor Chamber of Commerce, given that many of the labour market and workplace issues are the same. This sentiment was echoed by a business representative. He mentioned that the unions are also finding ways to work better with government, but more resources are needed given a situation of increasing immigration-related needs.

One employer, whose industry employs 130,000 auto workers, stated his concern regarding internationally-trained workers. His first major concern is the skilled labour shortages that may unfold in 5-10 years. He argued that, while some skilled workers may be unemployed today, it is essential to adopt a long-term view and try to gauge future labour market needs.

Temporary workers

A concern was expressed by labour representatives about trends affecting temporary foreign workers. The region has seen a large increase in the number of temporary workers in recent years, particularly in agriculture and construction. One issue is that

these workers live in a precarious situation, with little status and protection, and with no guarantee of work ahead of them.

Another labour representative from the same region argued that one of the program's drawback is that companies accessing it are being allowed to bring in workers for occupations in which, in his view, there are no skill shortages. He further argued that the government decrees which occupations are eligible for the program, but tends to do so using little or no data.

French-speaking immigrants

According to one service agency representative, many French speaking immigrants face a number of obstacles: an inability to communicate in English, which is the primary language in the Windsor area; their educational achievements and work qualifications are not recognized; and difficulty relating to the Windsor area's life and work culture. He argued that local social systems intended to aid the unemployed are geared toward the English population, resulting in the automatic referral of Francophone clients to English services that they do not always understand. Due to a lack of promotional funds, Francophone immigrants are unaware of what is available to them.

Foreign credential recognition

One intervener contended that the FCR process may be complicated in some highly technical professions, but that it is also true that many of these professions cannot even agree on one Canadian standard that would allow current citizens to transfer their skills inter-provincially. This results, in his view, in a situation where so much of the 'problem' is self-imposed, and perhaps self-serving for particular professions. When a standard is established in any profession, competency can be tested, just as it is for a Professional Transport Operator, and just as it is for students qualifying to graduate in the province's various educational institutions, for any trade or profession.

3.4 Saskatoon

The roundtable held in Saskatoon attracted participants from all over the province and, as such, it can be considered a province-wide event. The province's demographic and immigrant profile presented by the CLBC highlighted the following trends and facts: (1) immigrants represent a relatively low percentage of the population and are declining in importance; (2) for those who come and decide to settle in Saskatchewan, their retention rate is at the low end of the scale compared to many other provinces; and (3) the province has attracted fewer workers in the *skilled worker* stream and more in the *refugee* stream than elsewhere in Canada.

These facts and figures were validated by a participant, who further noted that while immigrants tend to have high levels of formal education in their homelands, they have problems in Canada with language, Canadian experience, and recognition of credentials. Another participant mentioned that, to date, Saskatchewan is not doing well at all in attracting immigrants and that the immigration point system discriminates in favor of

affluent, well-educated immigrants who tend to settle in Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver. He contended that low skilled foreign-trained workers could bolster Canada's rural areas.

A mixed view on program effectiveness

There were mixed views regarding the effectiveness of current immigration-related programs and services. One academic representative held a positive outlook on this issue by noting that the staff at the CIC office in Saskatoon have provided excellent service to their university for many years. This representative would be extremely concerned if the Saskatoon CIC office could not continue to provide the level of service they currently provide. That said, he expressed some dissatisfaction with the CIC toll-free number that they used to obtain information and assistance, finding it to be ineffective. He believed that the CIC website could be a useful resource for employers, but that it is not particularly helpful in its current form. Others at the roundtable indicated that the process of trying to reach a 'live body' through this phone line is lengthy, and sometimes the information simply cannot be obtained in a timely manner, or the information proves to be inaccurate or inconsistent.

Another participant expressed concerns about the processing time required for obtaining landed immigrant status. She noted that the introduction of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (the province's PNP) has been a positive change, but processing times are still lengthy. She mentioned cases that have taken three years and more, with the norm being approximately two years. One participant corroborated this view, commenting that, although it is improving, the PNP[3] process takes too long.

Commenting on the work of Canadian embassies and high commissions in particular, one participant noted that, in his view, some of the staff there can potentially provide meaningful assistance to employers and would-be immigrants, but that the visa staff tend to be non responsive. This participant reminded the audience of the fact that the immigration process starts before the immigrant leaves his or her country of origin.

Lack of employment opportunities

There was a general agreement that more efforts should be directed at attracting immigrants to meet current and future labour market needs in the province. That said, one labour representative, while generally in favour of attracting immigrants to the province, said that it should only be encouraged once all eligible Canadian-born workers have exhausted their employment possibilities. Currently, he said, trades workers in Saskatchewan are experiencing high unemployment and, given that, the province needs to take a hard look at inter-provincial labour mobility as part of the solution.

Another intervener was critical of the role the province plays in the immigration arena, noting that it is not doing anything in particular to attract or retain professional

[3] The Provincial Nominee Program derives from an agreement most provinces in Canada have with the Government of Canada that allows them to play a more direct role in selecting immigrants. The program tends to favor highly skilled immigrants and entrepreneurs.

immigrants. He felt that a majority of the immigrants most likely to move to Saskatchewan base their decision on other factors such as having friends or family already living in the province, or wanting to attend a particular college. He lamented the fact that more often than not these immigrants, after a couple of months or years residing here, move away due to lack of professional career opportunities, worries of becoming de-skilled, mental and professional stagnation, or clinical depression and general deterioration of health. He also pointed out that immigrants involved in the trades or agriculture seem to be adjusting better within the province of Saskatchewan, and maybe future immigration policies in Saskatchewan should focus on these industries or occupations.

Reviewing the oil and gas situation in the province, one labour spokesperson noted that it is difficult for displaced Canadian workers to access retraining dollars and that the tendency is to attract foreign-trained (in one case Venezuelan) workers to fill new employment opportunities, at the expense of unemployed, skilled Canadian-born workers living in the province.

A different perspective was provided by an employer who made the point that employers in his industry are experiencing severe labour shortages and have to recruit from countries like South Africa. In this regard, he noted that the PNP is improving but there are still efficiency issues with it. His recommendation was for government not to invest in the bureaucracy but, rather, to invest locally and regionally. He also suggested that immigration departments and programs should become more proactive in meeting employers' needs.

Discussing the plight of the trucking industry, one participant noted that changing market conditions in the global economy, particularly just-in-time requirements, are affecting the trucking industry dramatically. One consequence has been the rapid increase in demand for trucking services. Furthermore, the increase in trade with China has led to a container gridlock in Vancouver, and 9/11 has resulted in more stringent regulations to be met. The industry has some success stories to be told, but the current NOC codes are placing a hardship on the industry, to the effect that truck drivers are not classified as skilled labour and immigrants with a trucking background are thus not given preferred treatment (this point was also raised by another participant). Trucking companies recruiting abroad face important financial barriers, and government assistance is required for these companies.

Another member of the trucking industry commented that it is interesting to read in the CLBC slides that over 50% of private sector managers and labor leaders agree that there is a 'skills' shortage in the province and in the country. Yet at the same time Saskatchewan has immigrants with degrees who cannot find work, which would indicate their particular skills may not be relevant.

In the same vein, another participant made the point that immigration authorities need to 'debundle' the skilled worker category and give more importance to those with trades credentials, since there is in some locations shortages of tradespersons, coupled with an overabundance of university-trained immigrants. The point was made also that there is a

need to focus more on entry-level jobs and allow newcomers to gain experience and receive training so that they can eventually move up the career ladder.

One labour representative observed that, while government represents the largest employer in Saskatchewan, it seems almost impossible for immigrants to secure employment within the public service since incumbent union members are the first candidates considered for filling job opportunities, before outsiders can be considered.

Another participant called for the need 'to go back and see how we attracted immigrants in the past' when the country was being built. He felt there is currently a great shortage of skilled workers – not necessarily university-educated immigrants, but people with skills in technical and trades occupations. He observed that most developing countries in the third world do not have well-developed technical education systems, hence Canada is generally attracting university educated people when it targets "skilled workers." He called for a more concerted effort to recruit trades people.

Unwelcoming environment

Commenting on the province's retention issue, one participant contended that the harsh climate and discrimination are important factors explaining the situation. Many foreign-trained workers are said to leave because their families are not happy and do not integrate well into Saskatchewan society. Spousal integration represents an important issue related to that. The example of physicians and their families who, within a short while of moving to the province relocate abroad or to other provinces, was provided to illustrate the severity of this issue. In the long run, therefore, it is essential to focus on innovative practices that not only affect the attraction of immigrants, but also their retention and integration.

Another participant from the trucking industry discussed the example of a pilot project in which a decision was made by government to allow a transport operator to work under a one-year work permit while awaiting permanent residency, while his spouse would not get a work permit until all family members became permanent residents. According to this participant, this decision was the single largest factor in explaining the pilot's partial failure. He speculated that most of the recruits who have come over to Saskatchewan and then returned home have gone back because the family was homesick. He believed that this is not surprising when 'you bring a spouse thousands of miles from their friends and families, settle them in Saskatchewan in the winter, send the working partner on the road for a week or two at a time, and tell the other partner they have to stay home, alone.'

Access to language training

One university representative's understanding was that enhanced language training is available to landed immigrants but not to temporary residents. He mentioned that most immigrants employed at the university enter Canada on a temporary work permit and apply for landed immigrant status from within Canada. Since it takes at least two years to obtain landed immigrant status, these persons are *de facto* excluded from ELT for their first few years in Canada.

Lack of Canadian work experience

One employer questioned the claim that a lack of Canadian experience represents a serious impediment. He wondered whether this impediment is real, or whether it is a convenient excuse or a misinterpretation.

As a large employer of professional truck drivers currently facing labour shortages, one participant observed that a large number of Canadian-born candidates are turned away every week, not because they lack Canadian experience, but because they lack the relevant overall demonstrated experience and skills to be proficient in their job. He also mentioned that the foreign-trained professional operators his company has recently recruited do not have any Canadian experience *per se*, but they do have much valuable and relevant experience operating large, heavy equipment in congested areas and over long distances and across borders into foreign jurisdictions.

Recognition of credentials

One regulator pointed out that it is incredibly difficult to determine who meets the Canadian standards in the medical professions. The problem for foreign-trained workers is that we can only assess the end result of their education and training and not, as for Canadian-trained health workers, progress along the education/training continuum. That said, he was appreciative of the efforts, money and expertise that the federal government is bringing into FCR. He also mentioned that the Canadian public has very high expectations regarding standards of care, which can compound the situation. He further argued that there is no silver bullet, and that people tend to look for simple solutions that simply do not exist.

Another participant complained about the fragmented nature of FCR, arguing that it works well for engineers but not for other professions and calling for national standards and better country-wide coordination. The high cost of FCR was described by another participant as an important issue for newcomers, and it was suggested that financial incentives be provided to individuals to cover some these costs.

3.5 Victoria

The Victoria roundtable was successful in gathering a wide range of stakeholders from the business and labour communities, service delivery agencies, and the provincial government. The Honorable Patrick Wong, B.C. Minister of State for the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal & Women's Services, was invited and he provided an overview of the province's recent initiatives on immigration. He emphasized the good working relationships that his ministry has established with CIC. He also mentioned that during its last round of negotiations with the Federal Government, the province outlined its main areas of needs, which are: (1) front-end assessment of immigrant skills; (2) pre-employment training and skills upgrading; and (3) post-hiring skills development since there are a number of skills deficiencies that need to be addressed once foreign-trained workers find employment.

The immigration picture presented by the CLBC highlighted the following trends and facts: (1) an aging and slowing population; (2) a highly educated but more likely to be unemployed immigrant workforce; and (3) high retention among recent immigrants. These perspectives on immigration were confirmed by several participants, one of whom added that immigration presents an interesting challenge and a solution for Victoria's labour market needs, with rapidly and dramatically changing demographics and increasingly global competition for skilled workers. The point was made that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) need an increasingly diversified set of skills in order to successfully compete in the market place, thus increasing the importance of immigration.

Another intervener hypothesized that the United States and United Kingdom were the major source countries for skilled workers on Vancouver Island. He pointed out also that a lot of US residents have been seeking Canadian residency since the last presidential election; suggesting the presence of strong push factors from this country. By contrast, the Victoria area seems to have been losing a lot of its younger workers as they went to study and work in the US. On a different note, a participant discussed recent studies that indicate that the United States is expecting a shortage of 10 million workers in the near future, and this situation will intensify the global competition for attracting, recruiting and retaining skilled workers. In this context, there is a need to become even more strategic and systematic in our efforts to attract and integrate immigrants.

With respect to this country, one participant also suggested that the notion of cultural awareness training and education also applies to US immigrants, given that the Canadian culture probably has more in common with the United Kingdomthan with the US.

High cost of living a barrier

Several participants mentioned that the region's high cost of living constitutes a significant barrier in attracting and retaining foreign-trained workers, particularly in areas where salaries are not very high. High housing cost was identified as the major culprit in explaining the reluctance of low skilled immigrants to move into the area.

One participant spoke of the particular challenges facing employers from the health care sector. The lack of full-time, permanent positions for nurses makes it difficult for them to convince foreign-trained nurses to come here to work since they cannot be guaranteed regular employment and given the high cost of living. As a consequence, severe shortages exist for casual or part-time nursing positions.

Language training

The point was made that language training currently available to newcomers does not meet the need of today's labour market. It was said that Level 3 language training is certainly too low, given that even those applying to work as, say, dishwashers are required to produce a curriculum vitae. High unemployment in the region means that it is a 'buyers' market' and literacy becomes more critical in this context.

In the same vein, mention was made that literacy requirements can be extremely high in certain occupations, and lack of language skills was seen as a particular problem in

certain industries. The example of the electrician code book 'as thick as a dictionary' and unwieldy – even for those fluent in English – was provided, as one illustration of the significant linguistic requirements placed on certain occupations.

An interesting perspective was provided by another participant who argued that it is essential to dig beyond the surface in order to fully understand the immigration issue. For instance, the language barrier may in fact derive from a lack of communication skills and not so much a lack of language fluency. The point was made that even Canadian-born young workers are also lacking in communication skills.

On the language fluency question, one intervener indicated that the province of Manitoba has done some interesting work to demonstrate that in certain occupations language skills requirements are actually higher for training than for actually doing the work. This situation may suggest that work-related language barriers are not as severe as is commonly believed.

Focusing on trades occupations

One intervener believed that there is a lack of awareness about apprenticeship and other bridging programs, and how they operate in Canada and specifically in British Columbia. He suggested that prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) should form an important part of the solution. It was mentioned that existing government websites do not provide enough information on skilled trades, and that the lack of foreign credential recognition also affects the construction industry.

In a similar vein, one central issue identified by a construction industry representative was that there is no financial incentives available to allow a Canadian worker sitting idle in, say, Halifax to come work in British Columbia for six months, thus providing a labour market adjustment mechanism. He argued that such rigidities in the system must be fixed before we look at immigration as the solution to solve labour shortage issues. Resources need to be mobilized to allow Canadian workers to move around.

Union role

One labour representative took issue with recent changes to B.C.'s procurement policy, noting that in highway construction one clause of the collective agreement dealt with equity representation and allowed for the hiring of, among other groups, a certain number of immigrants. Current B.C. procurement policy, however, has done away with this clause, thus reducing employment opportunities for immigrants.

4. INSTRUCTIVE PRACTICES: LESSONS FROM THE COMMUNITIES

The five roundtables provided ample opportunity to hear from local and provincial stakeholders about the initiatives, partnerships and programs they have developed and that can offer insight about what works and what does not in the area of immigrant attraction, retention and integration. One constant that most of these programs and initiatives share is a focus on partnerships and sharing of resources. This chapter summarizes those best practices, drawing from each of the five roundtables.

4.1 Fredericton

Government-sponsored initiatives

In New Brunswick, a joint *Federal-Provincial Working Group on Immigration* has been formed that brings together various government partners to discuss and share information on immigration. The existence of this group has greatly increased the collective understanding of each other's mandates, departmental objectives and processes, as well as established better interpersonal relationships that are focused on the common goal of increasing immigration to the province, as well as more successful integration into the workforce and communities.

Provincial members of the working group represent Business New Brunswick; Training and Employment Development; Intergovernmental and International Relations; Education; and Enterprise Network. Federal members are drawn from CIC; HRSDC; ACOA; Agriculture Rural Secretariat; Heritage Canada; and CBSC.

This group has been together for almost a year; it has completed a gap analysis, developed an action plan, and started working on various initiatives in a collaborative fashion. The view is that it would be most effective to utilize this group for further developing resources for immigration. Two examples of projects the group is working on are a brochure targeted at employers and the immigration portal. The brochure will be used to help employers understand the process of hiring an immigrant. It will also be used by all government partners as a means to present a consistent message and not work in a contradictory fashion with the end user. The immigration portal was designed to ensure that points of view and services offered by the various partners and stakeholders are presented in a similar, organized fashion.

An agreement was signed April 1, 2003 between *Business New Brunswick and CIC* to allow foreign students who graduate from colleges and universities in New Brunswick to work in the province, in their field of study, for up to two years (up from one year). The permit allows these students to work up to 20 hours a week during the academic sessions and full time during academic breaks.

CIC and Heritage Canada co-funded a project with the Societé des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick to develop a community-level strategy on

Francophone immigration. The strategy will be based on the so-called Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities.

Private sector initiatives

One local private employer has been very pro-active in hiring and supporting the integration of immigrants. A company representative commented on the effective support received by *Enterprise New Brunswick*, noting that other departments do not appear to be as visible or active in the immigration area.

An important point was made to the effect that newcomers need to be integrated socially as well as economically. In this regard, the *McCain Company*, working closely with the town of *Florenceville*, has been running 'boot camps' for foreign students in small, rural centres of the province (40 local graduates were targeted and 35 completed it). The company also has a buddy system whereby mentors are available to help newcomers integrate and access needed services. A representative from the company also talked about the need to improve on the education system, since a good school can be an important factor of attraction.

Other initiatives

The *New Brunswick Multicultural Council* is present in several New Brunswick communities and it has recently put together a New Brunswick Enhanced Language Training proposal. The proposal highlights the language differences inherent in the province, such as the requirements for bilingualism, and the existence of three smaller centres and corresponding absence of one larger centre. The Council has also developed a Diversity Training Program, which is considered an important initiative to prepare the workforce for upcoming changes.

The *Multicultural Association of Carleton County* is working on three pilots. One is to assess the needs of immigrant women in Carleton County; another is to conceive and present workshops on diversity; and the third is to prepare an information tool kit on Multiculturalism, Diversity and Immigration in Carleton County. These 2003-2005 projects are funded by Heritage Canada and New Brunswick Training and Employment Development.

Connect NB Branché and the Multicultural Council of New Brunswick are working to establish pilot immigrant-focused access centres in three New Brunswick communities.

Mount Allison University is currently involved in three projects of relevance: First, a team of sociologists has received funding from the Gender Domain of the Atlantic Metropolis Centre to look at the problems immigrant women face in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John as they embark on their new lives in New Brunswick. Second, a research team from Mount Allison's Rural and Small Town Programme has been commissioned by the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to prepare a discussion paper on rural repopulation issues and strategies, which is slated for a March 2005 release.

Carrefour d'immigration rurale is a project designed to develop a model for immigration to rural communities, in this case facilitating the immigration of applicants from Francophone countries. Church parishes and municipalities are working together on this project. Test sites are being developed in Saint-Léonard, New Brunswick, as well as in Manitoba and Prince Edward Island.

Business New Brunswick has established a working group with the departments of Training and Employment Development, Education, and Health and Wellness to identify professions/occupations in shortage to align with immigrant recruitment initiatives.

In spring of 2004, *Enterprise Fredericton* created a working group to advance its city immigration strategy. Members include: CIC; Multicultural Association of Fredericton; Business New Brunswick; the regional office of HRSDC; Training and Employment Development; and academia.

4.2 Hamilton

Business- and union-sponsored initiatives

A union representative spoke of a pilot project with *Maple Leaf Foods* that was a success. Under this project, some of the temporary workers hired by the company were given a permanent status after three years. The suggestion was made that CIC should be looking at implementing such a program nation wide, targeting low skilled temporary workers.

Other initiatives

The City's Economic Development Department commissioned in May 2002 a human resource study entitled *HR Matters*, which was designed to examine the long-term implications for the city's economy of an aging population. The study made ample references to the current and potential contribution immigration can make in terms of helping local employers meet their workforce requirements. It also served as a launching pad for a June 2005 conference that the City is organizing on immigration.

Mention was made of the existence of Ontario's *Regulators for Access*, a consortium of regulators (two thirds of which are health-related). This group has, among other things, created two forums designed to deal with language-specific training, and there is a real interest in supporting the development of apprenticeship programs.

It was also mentioned also that the *Ontario College of Physicians* was moving away from a strictly paper credentialing process, as exemplified by the clinical assessments that took place at the University of Toronto teaching hospital. However, the issue of who pays for training, bridging, etc. has not been resolved since funding comes entirely from the public sector. The lack of training spots for international medical graduates is also a very important issue.

A representative from the *Settlement and Integration Services Organization* (SISO) mentioned that immigrant serving agencies work well with employers, through the local

Chamber of Commerce, for instance. One example is the partnership between SISO and the *Scotia Bank*, which allows new immigrants to open bank accounts even when they are awaiting their Canadian social insurance number. A representative from this bank added that such initiatives make good business sense, and the bank has also been targeting immigrants for employment opportunities at its location.

SISO also provides employers with an opportunity to explain to immigrants what the business does, and it now has a database that employers can use to seek qualified applicants. SISO does a preliminary screening of applicants.

Another local agency provides mentoring services, allowing foreign-trained workers to gain some all-important Canadian experience, or at least learn about the Canadian work environment and its requirements.

4.3 Windsor

Government-sponsored initiatives

One city representative mentioned that the contribution of immigration to the city's workforce development has been recognized as a priority by the *City of Windsor Workforce Development Task Force*, which will be launched in May 2005 and will report on progress in six months. The representative was happy to know that the federal government is considering municipalities as an important partner.

Union-sponsored initiatives

The *Canadian Autoworkers Union* (CAW) has a department of Human Rights – and in fact, every local of the union must by constitution have a human rights committee. The existence of these committees represents a demonstration of an initiative that can effectively address the challenge of helping immigrants integrate into the workplace.

The *Basic Education for Skills Training* program was negotiated by the CAW with the Big Three auto companies. This program is funded out of contract agreements with these employers and delivers basic literacy and ESL to participants for up to four hours a week for 37 weeks. Some of the participants are foreign-trained workers. BEST is also present in other unions, thus representing a good example of a very relevant program.

The CAW also sponsors a sensitivity program called *Building Respectful Workplaces*, which deals with respecting fellow workers. This program is also funded through negotiated agreement with employers and it promotes respect and equity in the workplace. The union has also undertaken some collective agreement translation; in one case the collective agreement was translated to Vietnamese at the union's expense.

Other initiatives

A *YMCA* representative mentioned the existence of an occupational terminology program targeted at foreign-trained trades workers who are lacking in language skills or

knowledge of specific workplace terminology. The program allows participants to practice for writing their trades exams.

A representative from the *Collège Boréal* spoke of the *voie rapide boréale* program, which is currently funded by Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for five months. The program is designed to get jobs to immigrants quickly. Phase I of the program involves the development of a one-stop site for information about how to obtain credential recognition, where to get language training, etc. This program is part of an initiative that involves building a website and creating a handbook for employment consultants, so that they can better understand immigrants' needs. The representative discussed a Phase II that will start next year and is designed to be more practical, involving, for instance, connecting immigrants to job fairs.

4.4 Saskatoon

Employer-sponsored initiatives

The *Yanke Group* has been participating for the past several months in a pilot project along with two other transportation companies, the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, Saskatchewan Immigration, and HRSDC. The project involves attracting experienced long-haul transport operators from the United Kingdom to Saskatchewan to help fill a demonstrated shortage of qualified local operators.

One company representative believes that this pilot project represents a good example of an innovative practice that is attracting employable and employed immigrants to the province. The partnership involving the federal government, the provincial government, the trade association, and actual operating companies is a demonstration of the type of collaboration that could be forged in other industries and trades to facilitate the successful integration of new and desirable immigrants into the country.

A general point was made that the most successful practice for integrating and retaining immigrants in the community requires a community support plan, whereby the whole community is involved – business, health care providers, religious organizations, educational groups, etc. – and acts as mentor to the new families. Companies that hire these immigrant workers encourage their employees and their families to play a mentoring or twinning role. Rural towns in Saskatchewan can provide very effective support groups and become very accepting communities, since many Saskatchewan-based manufacturing companies are located in rural areas.

Other initiatives

One member of a local race relations and cultural diversity group pointed out that there are benefits to adopting a grassroots perspective on immigration. He stressed the importance of a community response to issues faced by immigrants, noting that it has the potential to bring about faster and more effective actions. The community is relying upon volunteers, unions and employers, and has had measurable success with, for instance,

Sudanese immigrants. He argued that the lack of Canadian experience may not be as critical a barrier as some would argue.

Another participant mentioned that Saskatchewan is one of the two or three provinces that extend temporary one-year practice licenses to physicians (especially those moving to rural areas), thus allowing them to practice while preparing for their Canadian Medical Licensing examinations.

4.5 Victoria

Government-sponsored initiatives

The *BC government* is currently supporting a few pilot projects that seek to attract immigrants to second-tier cities. These pilots stem for the need to cooperate on the development of regional mechanisms to support local initiatives and planning groups.

The *Community of Trail* has developed a website that is designed to attract immigrants. It is regularly updated by a wide range of local stakeholders.

Employer-sponsored initiatives

One initiative of the *Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce* is a publication targeted at US would-be immigrants that informs them of the steps required for immigrating to Canada. The idea behind this publication was a recognition that the immigration system is inherently complex, and that many migrants end up hiring immigration lawyers because of this complexity.

Another initiative worth mentioning is the *Job Waves* program, which operates as a partnership between the provincial government and local Chambers of Commerce. The program supports job matching through its so-called Global Job Finding System, which is linked directly to Chambers of Commerce. This program has been deemed very successful by a participant, and it highlights the fact that industry-based models are relevant to the province's immigration needs and issues.

Another example of a successful partnership involves the *Canadian Home Builders Association* and the *Musqueam First Nation*, through which eight Aboriginal workers and eight foreign-trained workers jointly undertake residential construction training.

Other initiatives

A *Nanaimo-based service agency* has been actively promoting the attraction and integration of immigrants into the community. In the midst of carrying out its activities, it has come to realize that immigration was simply 'not on the community radar screen.' As a result, it has established a partnership with a local college to target its international students, who come mostly from China, Korea, Japan and India. A survey of these students – 400 questionnaires were sent and a 20% response rate was achieved – found that 70% of these students would like to come live in Canada. They identified the lack of

Canadian work experience as a major barrier. Although their language skills are sufficient, their lack of knowledge about workplace culture was seen as an issue. The point was made that these students represent a significant opportunity, given that if they were to immigrate, they would bring with them their well-off families.

The Honorable Dr. Fry mentioned a Vancouver-based pilot project called Hippy that involves *Simon Fraser University* delivering a six-month literacy program to immigrant women, and leading to a certificate from the university. The program is premised on a transfer of knowledge and literacy skills from the mother to her children and to other immigrant women.

The *Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of British Columbia* (ASTTBC), through its affiliate organization TechWORKS! and in conjunction with the association's AGM, will host a two-day conference in June 2005 entitled 'Building Careers in Technology: A Strategic Planning Conference.' Prominent members of the immigrant assistance community have been invited to sit as panelists in several plenary sessions during the conference, one objective being to verify the anticipated skills shortages in the province due to impending retirements and to ensure that ASTTBC is 'doing all the right things right' in an effort to meet the challenges this situation presents over both the short and long terms.

A partnership between the *Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Centre Society and HRSDC* has existed for 14 years to help immigrant job seekers enter the local labour force. Current partnerships between the Society and many local ethnic organizations help immigrants access local community resources and services. Partnerships between the Society and many small business employers have assisted over 5,000 immigrant jobseekers to successfully enter the local labour market. Another partnership involving the Society, local employers, and over 250 skilled trade workers has been developed to deal with both the local labour/skills shortages and specific issues pertinent to these skilled trade workers.

5. SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

This chapter reports on the various suggestions and recommendations that were made by roundtable participants, with a view to shedding light on the possible roles business, labour, government and other groups could play in attracting, retaining or integrating immigrants into second-tier communities. One central message that was heard throughout the discussions is the need to join forces, share resources, and establish partnerships, if we are to effectively address the immigration issues and challenges that were identified. Given that, the grouping of suggestions and recommendations by stakeholder group is somewhat arbitrary, but it provides a convenient way to organize the discussion points. No attempt has been made to interpret or assess the suggestions; they are simply recorded without analysis.

Adopting a broader, inclusive perspective on immigration

Several participants at various roundtables made general statements regarding the need to adopt a broad, inclusive perspective on immigration that would involve all skateholders. As well, the importance of considering both the short-term needs of immigrants and the longer-term needs of the labour market was emphasized by some. Beyond that, a number of guiding principles and general action lines were proposed, including:

- The need to look at the individual situation of the immigrants that we are recruiting, particularly the needs of family members and the community environment in which they are settling.
- The importance of considering the potential contribution to be made by the dependents of the principal immigrants, since they are often highly educated and experienced in a wide range of areas of work.
- The need for a national strategy that is future oriented and connects together local, provincial and the federal governments; the need to look beyond settlement services and take a hard look at how well educational and housing needs are being met; the need to separate refugees from other classes of immigrants in discussing issues and service delivery; and a requirement that the federal government work with the provinces, and in order for that to happen, political leadership is needed.
- Partnerships are key to provide the array of services that are critical for the integration of newcomers; the network of agencies and partners are the 'welcoming mat' for immigrants and are thus playing an extremely important role. We need to acknowledge and respect each others' role and contribution.
- There needs to be a centralized location for employers to turn to in order to ask questions such as education comparability, security concerns, how to do reference checks overseas, comparable work experiences, etc. Language testing and training would be a benefit, providing a certificate on completion of testing and/or training.
- Implementing locally some short-term internship/mentoring programs geared toward meeting the need of employers in areas that geographically and

demographically differs from other cities with high immigrant population such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

- The federal government should be encouraged to recognize that CIC's role in delivering effective assistance and service to employers and potential immigrants is critical in order for all of us to succeed in recruiting and integrating immigrants.

5.1 Attracting and Retaining Immigrants to Second-Tier Cities

In general, most of the suggestions and recommendations that were made with respect to attracting and retaining immigrants were addressed to government. This finding is not necessarily surprising given the central role played by government in this area of activity.

A role for government

Raising public awareness about the contribution immigrants make

In some communities, a perception exists that some immigrants are considered 'job stealers,' although people forget that the doctors they see and the university professors who taught them are foreign trained. There is a need, thus, to educate people and raise awareness about the contribution immigrants make to our economic and social life. According to one intervener, by using good research and forecasts, public awareness about immigrants' contribution to the labour market, i.e. their contribution to labour force growth, can be raised.

Improving the overall effectiveness of the immigration process

There was near unanimity that the overall immigration process is slow and cumbersome and, therefore, that steps should be taken to increase its efficiency. In the words of one Saskatchewan-based intervener, 'anything that can speed up the paper process for a much quicker entry once medical, security and criminality checks are done would be very helpful.' He also pointed out that many companies are actively recruiting from a host of foreign countries right now and they do not need assistance with that process; they just need a quicker entry process.

The same participant recommended that the federal government allow immigrants into the country on the conditions that they commit to staying at least three years in the province. He reminded us that such requirements were very effective in the 1950s when many Germans came to Canada and worked in the rural areas in Alberta. The integration was apparently very smooth, little was paid in relocation costs, and the immigrants were quite successfully integrated in about five years.

Another way of improving the system would be, according to one participant, to provide realistic labour market and accreditation process information, particularly in the case of internationally-trained professionals. The information should be made available as soon as an applicant starts his or her immigration process overseas. It was mentioned that immigrants who originally choose Québec as their final destination and later move to another province face the same difficulties as immigrants coming from other countries. In

this context, special information about differences between provinces should be provided to applicants who choose Québec as their intended destination.

Improving the Provincial Nominee Program

With respect to the PNP, one participant argued that adding a deposit requirement and accompanying financial penalty provision *à la* Manitoba would be a good retention tool in some provinces. He believed the focus should be as well on appropriate selection, i.e. considering the assets foreign entrepreneurs and skilled workers bring, how would they fit in the province's context, etc.

Another participant talked about focusing on the business class by fixing the bureaucratic delays and other shortcomings of the PNP, suggesting that it would be a good way to better demonstrate how immigrants contribute economically and socially.

Focusing on foreign students

International students can make a potentially significant labour market contribution. They contribute to our economy when they are attending school; learn and adapt to Canadian social and business environments without a cost to government; and the family and home country connection can promote Canada to the world. They already understand how the [Canadian] system works and their language skills are on par with the Canadian born. They also have strong connections to their home country that Canada can benefit from. In order to maximize the contribution international students can make, there is a need to change the visa process and regulations. More generally, the federal government should give needing provinces and remote communities support for recruiting international students overseas.

Improving language fluency

There was broad support to recommend better access to training dollars for language and technical skills training. One participant went further by suggesting to make fluency in at least one of either the English or French languages mandatory before immigration. One union representative made the point that the $40 billion surplus in the EI fund should be used to fund, among other things, language and other types of training for both Canadian-born and immigrant workers.

Revising the point system and targeting specific occupations

There was a great deal of discussion on ways to improve the immigration point system and the desirability of targeting specific occupations. One employer from the trucking industry mentioned that their funding requests routinely get turned down for reasons difficult to ascertain, in a context when they need both entry-level and skilled workers.

The suggestion was made to have programs specifically targeting areas that are experiencing severe labour shortages, such as health care professional, engineers and truck drivers. Such programs, it was argued, may require sector specialists working in training teams and employer incentives for work placements.

To attract and retain professionals, another participant suggested favouring nations with democratic governments, strong education systems, and a proven track record of supplying universities and corporations with academic talent. The point was made that doing that would alleviate the credential problem we presently face with so-called professionals.

Participants from regions facing a shortage of skilled trades workers were quick to suggest that the point system should be revised to give more points to immigrants with trade certification than for those with university degrees, arguing that in the latter case, their degrees may not help them find work.

On an occupational basis, the following suggestions were made:

- One participant suggested that the point system and available labour market information be updated to reflect the glut of engineers currently in the system.
- Participants from the trucking industry called for the 'skilled worker' category to be defined carefully in all trades and professions, arguing that all truck drivers are not created equal and that the skills, training and experience that might allow someone to succeed operating smaller equipment in local or regional endeavors would not be adequate to operate large equipment and manage international commercial trade over long distances. More specifically, suggestions were made to: make the growth of the skilled worker classification a formal objective and make it a priority; carefully define 'skilled' trades and professions where there is a real need through a careful review of NOC codes; and set national standards for recognition of credentials in desired skills.
- Another participant recommended reviewing NOC codes with a view to better define the different skill levels in the trades; for example carpenters can be 'framing carpenters' or 'finishing carpenters,' welders can be 'journeyman stick welders' or 'production line welders.'

It was also argued that more use should be made of Census data, with a view to be more strategic about local and regional occupation needs. Such strategic use could prevent the flooding of the labour market with unwanted skills. Along those lines, the suggestion was made to provide would-be immigrants with all the information they need in order to make informed decisions, so that a better fit between immigrant skills and labour market needs, on an occupational and a regional basis, could be made.

A role for business

A general suggestion was made by an employer to form business-government alliances in order to specifically target and recruit desirable categories of internationally-trained workers pro-actively, rather than react to issues after they arrive. This employer also contended that once 'job fit' has been verified, 'team fit' and 'company cultural fit' can best be defined by the business community itself, perhaps helped along by reputable recruiting consultants.

Another business representative noted that since employers, business services and communities play a big role in the retention of newcomers, provinces could give income tax incentives to newcomers to help them recover some relocation expenses such as moving expenses, and phase out non-refundable tax credits and property tax reduction.

A role for labour organizations

One labour representative believed that immigrants need better information on employee rights and on how to act on those rights. The point was made that unions are well placed to provide access to such information. In addition, he suggested that a collaboration with the Human Rights Commission should be explored in order to undertake best practices or studies on this issue.

A role for community agencies and other groups

Several service agency representatives called for increased funding to support their ever increasing mandate and shrinking resources. One such person made the point that funding is required to ensure that service delivery become more flexible, to account for the working immigrants who may not have much time to access needed services during work hours. She added that the community also needs to play a lead role in finding local solutions to issues affecting immigrants, since some of these solutions may not fit existing program criteria.

5.2 Integrating Immigrants into Local Labour Markets

A general comment was made repeatedly to the effect that the challenge of immigrants' labour market and community integration requires a community solution. One intervener added that the focus should be on making the community sustainable socially, economically and environmentally and that, in order to meet the immigration challenge, system-wide changes to the credentialing process need to take place.

A role for government

Building on this notion of a community focus for immigration, one intervener recommended that government name a respected independent non-partisan facilitator in each community to bring the right people to the table and help the community address the challenges presented by immigration. Furthermore, these facilitators could come together periodically to ensure that individual community efforts contribute to Canada's collective effort.

Looking at the issue of immigrants' labour market integration from a different angle, one participant argued that in order to deal with the immigration challenge, one of most important issue is "creating jobs." Job creation can be seen as the driving force that can support families, communities, and the country. It is the backbone of Canada's social programs and, by extension, providing access to employment is the best means of ensuring that immigrants succeed in their social and economic integration.

Fiscal and financial incentives to businesses

Recognizing the importance for immigrants of gaining meaningful employment and Canadian work experience, several participants called upon government to provide support to employers so that they can assist immigrants in this regard. One participant recommended that government fund work placements similar to those programs for youth or EI recipients.

A few participants talked about the important of supporting mentoring programs since they are very effective, relevant initiatives, but they are faced with a financial sustainability issue. Financial and tax incentives were identified as tools that may be effective in encouraging SMEs to train, mentor and hire internationally-trained workers. Along these lines, a training tax credit targeted at immigrants represents a possible solution that may warrant further discussion, as is the creation of a wage subsidy program encouraging employers to hire immigrant job seekers who face multiple barriers to employment.

Incentives to integrate immigrants into the labour market could also include direct monetary incentives or tax incentives to employers for providing work experience, job shadowing, training or hiring. Furthermore, assistance can be provided to them so they can provide workplace culture or Canadian workplace training for immigrants. A similar suggestion is to provide tax incentives for employers who hire internationally-trained professionals or internationally-trained skilled trade workers into short-term internship programs. Furthermore, providing loan or financial assistance directly to internationally-trained professionals who cannot afford the high cost of accreditation would be a step in the right direction.

Support for Language Training

On the premise that ELT represents an important tool for assisting in the integration of immigrants, one individual recommended that such program be made available to temporary residents who have applied for landed immigrant status, so that they can access the program soon after arrival in Canada.

The same person believed that a study of best practices of English as a Second Language (ESL) would be useful. This study could include an analysis of language programs from Australia, New Zealand, England, etc. It could also include the analysis of certain European language systems, i.e. how German is taught as a second language to immigrants in Germany. This study could contain as well a review of program accessibility. In the Canadian context, for instance, some immigrants end up having to take a 30-minute bus trip to their ESL course after a full day at work.

Another participant recommended that ESL training be targeted at specific professional areas, such as engineering, health sciences, business, computer science, etc.

Upgrading the Temporary Worker Program

Several employers talked about the need to increase the scope of the temporary worker program. As it exists now, it is difficult for both employers and foreign workers to go about accessing it, especially SMEs, since they typically do not have a HR department or even dedicated HR personnel.

There is some agreement as well about the need to accelerate the process of moving temporary workers into a permanent status. A speedier process would allow us to keep some highly skilled, good workers. Reducing red tape would be a step in the right direction. One participant suggested that if an employer has difficulty filling a job and a temporary immigrant worker has the qualifications for that job, government should give that person a one-year work permit that can be extended twice (up to three years). In the event that this worker is still employed after three years, he and she should be given preferred treatment for acquiring landed immigrant status.

A role for business

In the view of one business representative, a useful initiative would be to encourage employers to offer workplace trials where skilled immigrants can acquire a Canadian work experience. Another private sector participant argued that a more targeted and flexible approach is required when dealing with foreign-trained skilled workers, considering that economic cycles affect the ability of employers to hire. In light of this, he suggested that an incubation program of some sort be put in place to allow immigrants with skills to come and be supported, even when employment prospects are dimmed. Incubation can also be seen as a tool for helping immigrants build their social capital – the networks that are required to find work and that they are often lacking. Within this context, incubation can provide a bridge between workers and employers.

Another intervener suggested that we compute the economic impact and cost to Canadian businesses of losses or potential lost opportunities attributable to not having immigrants in management or senior management positions within businesses. He believed the benefits would outweigh the costs, since immigrants are more likely to effectively initiate and encourage successful export opportunities for locally manufactured products or services to their home countries given their connections and local market knowledge of their home countries.

One participant argued for more multiculturalism training in the workplace. The assumption is that employers and service providers can and must do more in the delivery of immigrant services in the workplace. He mentioned the case of a company that has been reaching out to community groups in order to build better relationships with ethnic communities, but this has been going on without the assistance of other partners such as government that could facilitate these connections.

A role for labour

Several participants pointed out that the unions can play a useful role in providing support services for immigrants that can facilitate integration and improve retention. One

labour representative mentioned that labour-sponsored venture capital corporations can provide an opportunity for investees to look at immigration as a partial solution to meeting their workforce needs. More generally, it was pointed out that the presence of shop stewards can ensure that personalized support is readily available, and their role could be expanded to meet immigration-related needs. All in all, unionized workplaces and union organizations have underused capacity that can be tapped to address the integration issue.

Another intervener made the point that local unions are well structured to provide services such as language and cultural training to newcomers. Furthermore, the desire to work closely with governments and local serving agencies in the provision of services and integration into the community was expressed. Beyond all that, the point was made that immigrant workers need to be protected from unscrupulous employers who want to pay less than the norm, and some form of a monitoring system could be put in place to ensure such things do not happen. Unions can obviously play an important role in ensuring the immigrants' protection in the workplace.

By contrast, one participant challenged the unions to make apprenticeship and other types of training more accessible to young persons, including immigrants. His experience was that there is little manifestation of this openness. Another participant mentioned the fact that collective agreements can sometimes be a hindrance to hiring internationally-trained workers in the context of programs and pilot projects.

A role for community agencies and other groups

One participant mentioned that the possibility of establishing partnerships between employers and the admissions offices of universities should be investigated. Such partnerships would serve to educate employers about international credentials and give them a higher comfort level with unfamiliar education systems. This relationship could function at two levels: (1) general education of employers in a seminar format; and (2) specific support to employers on a candidate or international institution/program.

Another participant emphasized the presence of 'huge employment and training opportunities' between the trade and the professional levels, such as college-level technical occupations. He then stressed the need to 'get the words out' about these opportunities and suggested that bridging and laddering programs between these two levels be contemplated. Another suggestion is to train immigrants in career management so that they can maximize the use of their skills, considering that today's labour market is such that workers are increasingly required to upgrade their skills and move around.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Judging from the high level of participation and interest generated by the roundtables and the constructive dialogue that took place, it is fair to say that community stakeholders from all regions of the country are genuinely concerned about the demographic, social, and labour market issues that are affecting them, and they are looking for solutions. By the same token, they view the workforce integration of internationally-trained Canadians and immigrants as an important element of a local solution designed to address these issues. While views differ on how best to address the numerous labour market integration challenges facing internationally-trained workers, this is a consensus that Canada is currently wasting a considerable amount of the rich human capital that is embodied in the country's immigration pool.

What is clear also is that community stakeholders are not sitting idle, and they are actively engaged in trying to come to terms with the social and economic implications of a declining population and labour force growth, and growing immigrant population. The innovativeness that was apparent in the best practices that were presented speak of the their resolve and resourcefulness. That being said, participants to the roundtables made it clear that all three levels of government have an important role to play in supporting – financially or otherwise – the initiatives, programs and strategies that are required to facilitate the labour market integration of their internationally-trained Canadians and immigrants. A central message is that SMEs, labour organizations, and immigrant-serving agencies can and should play an effective role in the integration of internationally-trained workers, but they do not have all the resources required to play this essential role.

The diversity of immigration-related views, trends, issues and solutions that have emerged from these roundtable discussions reinforces the notion that the specific challenges and issues facing a community, and the type and magnitude of resources available to it, dictate the development of customized, locally- or regionally-based strategies and approaches. This observation is consistent with the increasing body of knowledge, in both the Canadian and international context, that suggests that 'solutions need to correspond with each community's uniqueness in terms of demographic characteristics, labour market needs and capacities, and industry trends.'[4] The vast array of unique and innovative practices that have been developed at the regional and community levels – and that were presented during the roundtables – provide testimony to the various forms and shapes local solutions can take.

[4] Elizabeth McIsaac, *Immigrants in Canadian Cities : Census 2001 – What Do the Data Tell Us?*, in Policy Options, May 2003.

Appendix A

Model Agenda for the Roundtables

Opening remarks and review of agenda
***Shirley Seward**, Chief Executive Officer*
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Welcome and overview of federal initiatives
***Honourable Dr. Hedy Fry**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration*

Questions and answers on the Honourable Dr. Hedy Fry's presentation

Presentation on national, provincial and local trends in immigration
***François Lamontagne**, Senior Researcher*
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Questions and answers on immigration presentation

Health Break

Facilitated Discussions
The following questions are meant to serve as a helpful guide to discussion:

1. In general, how would you say your community is doing in terms of attracting immigrants and integrating them into the workforce?
2. How well is it doing in terms of retaining them once they move to the city?
3. What examples can you share of innovative practices that have helped improve the attraction, integration or retention of immigrants into the community's workplaces?
4. What further partnerships might be explored or developed to improve the attraction, retention and integration of immigrants into the community's workforce?

Closing Remarks
***Honourable Dr. Hedy Fry**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration*

***Shirley Seward**, Chief Executive Officer*
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Appendix B

List of Participants and Observers to the Roundtables

Fredericton Roundtable

January 25, 2005
Lord Beaverbrook Hotel, Petitcodiac Room
659 Queen Street
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Participants

Annette Albert
Director of Administration
New Brunswick Community College - Saint John

Lisa Bamford
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Training & Employment Development

Paul Blackmore
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Rosemary Clews
Assistant Vice President (Research)
Atlantic Metropolis Centre
St. Thomas University

Sean Cooper
Regional Executive Director
Atlantic Provinces Chambers of Commerce

Jonathan Davenport
Human Resources Specialist
UPS Canada

Bonnie Doughty
Employment Facilitator / Case Manager
Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc.

Lynda Finley
Director of Regulatory Services
Nurses Association of New Brunswick

Dr. Hedy Fry
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons

Kalie Hatt-Kilburn
Policy Analyst
ACOA-New Brunswick

Anne Hébert
Recherchiste/Rédactrice
Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick

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Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan (New Brunswick Division)

Sharon Hebert
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New Brunswick Federation of Labour

Mike McIntosh
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Business New Brunswick

Andrew McLeod
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Louis Pierce
Manager, Human Resources
McCain Foods Limited

Dave Plante
Vice-President
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, New Brunswick Division

Kim Power
Representative
Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada

Anil Rastogi
Chief Information Officer
McCain Foods Limited

Dawn Robichaud
First Vice-President
New Brunswick Federation of Labour

Odette Robichaud
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Robin Saliba
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Shirley Seward
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Tim Shaw
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Atlantic Chamber of Commerce

Linda Silas
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Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions

Roxanne Tarjan
Executive Director
Nurses Association of New Brunswick

Kaboulé Weva
Table de concertation provinciale sur
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Centre syndical et patronal du Canada

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Human Resources and Skills Development
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Lilian Wo
Immigration Officer
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Beverly Woznow
Senior Project Executive
Investment and Immigration
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Hamilton Roundtable

February 9, 2005
Sheraton Hamilton Hotel, Ballroom East
116 King Street West
Hamilton, Ontario

Participants

Lisa Anderson
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Associate Professor, Political Science
McMaster University

Kathy Buffett
Director
Community Programming Branch
City of Hamilton

Katya Duvalko
Director, Executive Office and Policy
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
Chair
Ontario Regulators for Access Consortium

Judy Forbes
Employee Labour Relations Advisor
McMaster University

Barry Fraser
Ontario Representative
Canadian Labour Congress

Lisa Hammond
Vice-President, Hamilton Wentworth Local,
Elementary Teachers Federation (EFTO)

Hon. Dr. Hedy Fry
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of
Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons

Anthony Haynes
City of Hamilton, Ontario Works

Gayle Holmes
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Hamilton Health Sciences

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Settlement and Integration Services Organization
(SISO)

Jim Jones
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Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology
Mohawk College

Mike LeBlanc
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Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council

Sharon Leonard
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Ontario Association of Certified Engineering
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Access to Professions and Trades Unit
Ontario Ministry of Training,
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Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board

Wayne Marsden
President
Hamilton and District Labour Council

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Scotiabank

Jan Potts
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Hamilton Human Resources & Skills
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Michael R. Price
Deputy Registrar, Licensing and Registration
Professional Engineers Ontario

Roozbeh Rahimpour
Principal
Davarcci Associates Inc. & Hamilton Chamber of
Commerce

Stan Raper
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Inez Rios
Executive Director
St. Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre

Linda Rogers
Training Consultant
Mohawk College

Charlie Scibetta
Staff Representative
United Steel Workers of America

Shirley Seward
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Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Bob Sutton
Vice-president
Hamilton and District Labour Council and United Way Labour Representative

Aurelia Tokaci
Manager,Employment Services,
Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO) - Board member

Judy Travis
Executive Director
Hamilton Training Advisory Board

Charlotte Yates
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Canadian Labour and Business Centre

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François Lamontagne
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Ted Nelligan
Business Representative
Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council

Natasha Pateman
Analyst
HRSDC Foreign Credential Recognition Division

Ruby Puni
Settlement Officer
CIC Ontario Region

Victoria Roundtable

March 2, 2005
Victoria Conference Centre, Level 1, Saanich Room
720 Douglas Street, Victoria, British Columbia

Participants

Robin Adair
Executive Director of BC Business
WCG International Ltd.

Megan Begley
Project Manager, Registration Department
The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEGBC)

Pam Bosmans
Victoria District Labour Council

Dennis Carlsen
City Planner
City of Victoria

Bruce Carter
Chief Executive Officer
Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce

Mark Curtis
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Johanne Fort
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Government of British Columbia

Hon. Dr. Hedy Fry
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons

Abigail Fulton
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Carmen Galang
Associate Professor
Faculty of Business, University of Victoria

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Kerry Jothen
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Geoff Sale
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Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of Britis h Columbia (ASTTBC)

Hilde Schlosar
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Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society

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Viet Tran
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Catherine Wayne
CDI College of Business, Technology and Health Care

Patrick Wong
Minister of State
Ministry of Community, Aboriginal & Women's Services

Observers

Darlana Ball
Acting Manager
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Heriety Hadgu
Case Manager
Victoria Immigrant Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS)

François Lamontagne
Senior Researcher
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Andrew Lane
Manager, LMDA Secretariat
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Tim Woods
Director, Communications
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Saskatoon Roundtable

March 18, 2005
Radisson Hotel Saskatoon, Michelangelo-B Room
405 Twentieth Street East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Participants

Armin Badzak
Neohaus Design Studio

Rosemarie Brown
Human Resources Director
Trailtech Inc.

Elaine Burnett
EF Burnett and Associates

Tom Cooper
Yanke Group of Companies

Clay Dowling
President
Ghost Transportation Services

Hon. Dr. Hedy Fry
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons

Collene Fuglerud
HR Advisor
University of Saskatchewan,
Human Resource Department

Bertha Gana
Executive Director
Saskatoon Open Door Society

Monica Goulet
Cultural Diversity & Race Relations Coordinator
City of Saskatoon

Garnet Greer
Vice-President
I.B.E.W 529
Business Manager
Saskatchewan Building Trades

Jacqueline Grenier
Guichet unique de l'Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise

Adrienne Hagen
Health Policy Analyst
Saskatchewan Medical Association

Ann Hendry
Employment & Classification Facilitator
Saskatoon Health Region

Gord Hunter
National Rep
Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union of Canada

Hamid Javed
Equity Consultant
Saskatchewan Intercultural Association

Gurcan Kocdag
Chief Operating Officer
Doepker Industries Ltd.

Brian Kraus
Dean
Basic Education, SIAST (The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology)

Candace Lafferty
Consultant, Aboriginal Issues
University of Saskatchewan, Human Resource Department

Gary Leland
Chief Financial Officer
Standard Machine

Andrew Mason
Chair
City of Saskatoon Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Committee

Betty Mutwiri
President
Mutwiri & Associates Consulting

Marge Nainaar
General Manager
Prince Albert Multicultural Council

Rhonda O'Hagan
RN, Competence Assurance Coordinator
Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association

Judy Panko
Acting Manager
Saskatoon, Can-Sask
Department of Community Resources and Employment

Shannon Patterson
Human Resources Coordinator
Hitachi Canadian Industries Ltd.

Denis Prudhomme
President
Prudhomme Trucks Ltd.

Conrad Pura
Executive Director
Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board

Bryan Salte
Associate Registrar
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan

Derwyn Sangster
Director of Business
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Gerlinde Sarkar
Academic Director, Planning, Research & Development
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

Candace Snyder
Assistant HR Manager
Maple Leaf Meats

Andrew B. Turnbull
General Manager
Delta Bessborough

Robert Vineberg
Director General
Prairies and Northern Territories Region
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Ken Winton-Grey
Vice President
Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 333

Hank Wolbaum
Executive Director
Saskatchewan Trucking Association

Bob Young
Business Consultant
Sutton Group, Results Realty

Dawn Zhou
CSIT Consulting

Wade Zawalski
Assistant to Minister
Government of Saskatchewan

Doug Zolinsky
Executive Director
Saskatchewan Industry and Resources

Observers

Fred Amaya
Principal Consultant
Innovo Consulting
Project Manager
Saskatchewan Advances Technology Association

Meg Brookes
Regional Program Consultant , Employment Programs
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Carla Burke
Employment counselor
Saskatoon Open Door Society

Anna Chanmany
Economic Immigration Advisor
Saskatchewan Immigration Branch
Government of Saskatchewan

Sandra Daku
Human Resources Manager
Maple Leaf Meats

Ken Dishaw
Director of Human Resources
Saskferco Products Inc.

Deb Donaldson
Employer / Corporate Circles Manager
Metis Employment & Training of Saskatchewan Inc.

Mike Fitzpatrick
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Naomi Frankel
American Federation of Musicians
Co-Chair, Saskatchewan Coordinating Group for RPL

Erich Keser
Employment counselor
Saskatoon Open Door Society

Anna-Leah King
City of Saskatoon Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Committee
Curriculum Development / Program Leader
Aboriginal Education – Saskatoon Catholic Schools

François Lamontagne
Senior Researcher
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Patrick MacKenzie
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Jackie McKee
Physician Co-ordinator
Saskatoon Health Region

Kevin Mooney
Manager, Human Resources
Prudhomme Trucks Ltd.

Dan Parent
Plant Manager
Maple Leaf Meats

Patrick Pitka
Vice President, Finance and Administration
Hitachi Canadian Industries Ltd.

Abdul Akin Sadiku
Founder and CEO
i-MobileConnections

Dastageer Sakhizai
Saskatoon Community Mediation Services

Ron Torgerson
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour

Gatdeet Wakou
City of Saskatoon Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Committee

Louise Welen
Employment Counsellor
Saskatoon Open Door Society

Tim Woods
Director of Communications
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Windsor Roundtable

March 31, 2005
Hilton Windsor, Erie/Huron Room
227 Riverside Drive West, Windsor, Ontario

Participants

Connie Ashby
Coordinator, Occupational Terminology Training
Employment Services
YMCA

Emmanuel Azzopardi
President
Hercules Molded Products

Bill Baker
Special Assistant to the Mayor
Project & Policy Advisor
City of Windsor

Kelly Bevan
Research & Development Officer
Innovation & Business Development
St. Clair College

Zeljka Bogunovic
Settlement Services Coordinator
Windsor Essex County Family YMCA

Bill Capitano
Labour Council Chaplain

Marcela Ciampa
Manager
Centre for Training & Consulting in the Not-For-Profit Sector
United Way/Centraide
Windsor-Essex County

Les Dickirson
Chair of the Human Rights Committee
Windsor Labour Council

Rob Evans
President
Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association
Windsor Division

Hon. Dr. Hedy Fry
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons

Alain Gaudette
Conseiller en matière d'emploi
Centre de Ressources et de Recherche en emploi

Kenny Gbadebo
Executive Director/Founder
The Youth Connection Association

Maureen Geddes
President
CANGRAM International Inc.

Jim Glasier
Manager, Business Attraction
Windsor-Essex County Development Commission

David Grimaldi
Director, New Canadians' programs
Windsor Essex County Family YMCA

Tomi Hulkkonen
Organizer
Greater Ontario Regional Council of Carpenters, Drywall and Allied Workers, Local 494

Iole Iadipaolo
Director of Settlement Inclusion & Community Relations
New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc.

Josue Kayijaho
Community Developer, Health Issues
United Way Windsor Essex

Henry Lau
2nd Vice-President
Canadian Association of Moldmakers
President
Standard Tool and Mold

Gaston Mabaya
Project Manager
Integration of Internationally Educated Professionals
Collège Boréal

Tony Mao
Settlement Counsellor
Windsor Essex County Family YMCA

Fabiola Mascaro
Student Services
St. Clair College

Pattie Matte
HR Recruiter
Family Tradition Foods

Bob McGuire
Co-Executive Director
Windsor Family Forum

Robert MacIntyre
Vice President
Essex and Kent Building Trades Council

Ana Milojevic
Life Skills Program Manager
Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County

Bryan Neath
United Food & Commercial Workers Union Canada

Tony Parete
President
Valiant Tool & Mold Inc.

Peter Pellerito
Trustee
Labour Council

Helen Petrimoulx
Director
Windsor Refugee Office

Karl Richter
Leggett & Platt Automotive Group
Chairman
Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association (APMA)

Derwyn Sangster
Director of Business
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Diane Soucie
Net Success Inc.

Shakti Wadehra
Windsor Chamber of Commerce

Art Williams
Human Resource Advocate
Family Tradition Foods

Observers

Robert Bruce
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Brigid Hayes
Director of Labour
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

François Lamontagne
Senior Researcher
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Patrick MacKenzie
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Melissa Slatkoff
Analyst
HRSDC Foreign Credential Recognition Division

Tim Woods
Director of Communications
Canadian Labour and Business Centre